श्री कृष्ण लाल बाल्मीकि: मेरा सवाल है कि आज इन वर्गों के लोगों की स्वतंत्रता पर सरकार क्या कर रही है? क्या डा0 भीमराव अम्बेडकर साहब का यही सपना था?

श्री मुकुल वासनिक: चेयरमैन साहब, माननीय सदस्य ने विशेष रूप से बाल्मीकि समाज के अधिकारों और उनकी परेशानियों के बारे में यहां पर ज़िक्र किया है। मैं समझता हूं कि अनुसूचित जातियों में बाल्मीकि समाज ही एक ऐसा समाज है कि जिसको बहुत अधिक परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता है। सरकार का प्रयास, विशेष रूप से बाल्मीकि समाज के सामने जो परेशानियां हैं, उन्हें किस तरह से दूर किया जा सकता है, उन पर अलग-अलग दिक्कतों का जो बोझ है, वह बोझ किस तरह से कम किया जा सकता है, उस दिशा में जारी है।

3G spectrum auction

*2. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:††

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Department of Telecom (DoT) has decided to refer 3G spectrum auction to the new Government for taking a final decision;

(b) whether allocation has been a bone of contention between Government and mobile operators;

(c) if so, whether with this decision of referring the spectrum issue to new Government, the country's top three GSM operators, *viz.* Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Essar and Idea Cellular, have saved around Rs. 4000 crore in the current financial year because of delay of DoT in this regard; and

(d) if so, by when Government would take a final decision for allocation of 3G spectrum?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA) : (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) In view of differences between TRAI and DoT on a number of issues such as number of blocks of spectrum to be auctioned, reserve price for spectrum and annual administrative charge, it has been decided to refer the matter to the Empowered Group of Ministers.

(c) and (d) Do not arise as the auction of 3G spectrum has not taken place.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, this is a very important question. I must compliment the Government for making all efforts to raise Rs. 25-40,000 crores of revenue from auctioning the 3G spectrum. In this connection, various news items have been appearing in the newspapers, saying that the final auction is likely to take place in July, October or December. I would like to have a categorical clarification in reply from the hon. Minister as to how he is planning to do things as early as possible in order to save more revenue for the Government.

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††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, on 3G, the TRAI regulator had made a recommendation that it should be auctioned in September, 2006. The Government took a decision that it has to be auctioned, as per the recommendation made by TRAI, in 2007. Initially, TRAI had recommended that four slots be auctioned, since it was believed that the available spectrum might be bigger or the anticipated spectrum could be less. Meanwhile, it has been assessed in the Department that there were substantial amounts of spectrum in some areas while in some others, substantially greater spectrum was needed from the user agencies like Defence and other services. When it was disclosed that more spectrum was available and reference was made to the TRAI in the meanwhile as to how revenue could be collected in terms of annual incremental spectrum charges, the TRAI gave another recommendation, changing its mind, saying that instead of four slots, all the available spectrum may be auctioned. So, a controversy arose — it had appeared in the Press and was raised even in Parliament — regarding whether Government would auction four slots, as recommended by the TRAI earlier, or follow the latest recommendation given by TRAI, to give all the spectrum for auction. To avoid any controversy, the Department sought to refer the matter to the CCEA and in the last Government, it was decided to send it to CCEA. There was not much time left for the Government to decide and the new Government took over. After that, I referred the matter to the EGoM to minimize time. I had a discussion with the Finance Minister and the hon. Prime Minister also. The revenue would be collected as early as possible. Auctioning of 3G would be done as soon as the report comes from the EGoM, which is going to be constituted soon.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, my second supplementary question is this. It is very important for the Government to get revenue every day. If they delay, they would be losing revenue. Now, I understand that a Group of Ministers has been constituted and they would be submitting their report ultimately to the Cabinet and only then they would be able to do it. I would like the hon. Minister to suggest a time-limit for the same. The Groups of Ministers are usually quite busy and there are many Groups of Ministers and Committees; they won't be able to spare much time. For this they must spare more time and see to it that they try to give their report as early as possible. I would like the hon. Minister to make that clarification in the House.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, the case before the Government is not too complicated. There are two issues: What is the number of slots proposed to be auctioned? What would be the base price for each slot?

These two issues are before the EGoM and the Government. I hope it would be settled within a fortnight, as soon as the committee is constituted. Thereafter, as I have categorically told the Press and in the House too, the Department has already identified the auctioneer, one M/s Rothschild, an international company, by due process. They have promised that as soon the stipulation came from the Government, the process would be completed within three months.

SHRI ARUN JAITLEY: Sir, the spectrum is admittedly a very valuable public asset. And when a public asset is placed at the disposal of a private party, it is always expected that a fair market price would be taken. We are now in the second decade of participation of private players in the telecom sector and the experience of the past tells us that the valuation of the spectrum itself has been a matter of considerable debate. Last time when the 2G licences have been given, a particular valuation for the spectrum was fixed, which was start-up spectrum, which along with the licences was given to the allottees. Immediately, there was an experience that because the valuations charged at that time appeared to be inadequate, a *de facto* trading of licences started where a large number of allottees of licences started inducting foreign partners either by issuance of fresh capital or by giving them additional capital, and the amounts of market capitalisation of those companies, immediately on the allotment of licences of spectrum, was considered to be several times over and above the licence fee and the spectrum charges. Now that the auction is going to take place and the base price is going to be fixed, market forces have already determined from the transfer, that is, the allotment of fresh capital, the *de facto* value of the Spectrum. So, is the Government of India going to take into consideration that market value which is available now before it while fixing the base price for the future auction?

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, with due respect, there is a confusion in the minds of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who is an eminent lawyer, the Members of Parliament and the media also. The 2G spectrum has nothing to do with the 3G spectrum according to the TRAI recommendations and International Telecommunication Standards also. The Government migrated from the auction route in valuing the spectrum to the revenue route in the year 1999 by declaring National Telecom Policy, 1999. Under the National Telecom Policy, 1999, the Government has shifted from the auction route to revenue route. To be fair to the hon. Members of Parliament, spectrum is having no charge at all so far as 2G is concerned. That is the wrong notion in the minds of the Members of Parliament and the media also. For 2G, the spectrum is free almost. What we collected is the licence fee. We are giving 2G spectrum free of cost. We are collecting the revenue, which is more beneficial in terms of percolation of tele-density and in terms of revenue. Of course, per year in and around Rs. 60,000 crores are being collected from 2G Spectrum. Always an argument, as has been putforth before the Parliament and outside, is given that had it been auctioned, it might have fetched Rs. 1,00,000 crore or Rs. 60,000 crore. The question is, you migrated under NTP 1999 not to auction it. We are giving spectrum 4.4 MHz to all the operators. Of course, we permitted new licences, but not according to our own wishes. It has been permitted according to TRAI. We accordingly gave more licences. We went for dilution of company according to the FDI norms. You are well-aware; you are a senior lawyer. As per FDI norms, 74 per cent dilution is permitted. A person who has got licence of spectrum is entitled to give 74 per cent to abroad companies or domestic companies under which he makes money for the company, not put it into his pocket. So, 3G as per the recommendations of the TRAI is being

auctioned and for 2G we are going on the basis of allotment. Since I am continuing in this Government as Telecom Minister, I want to share further more facts. I had a discussion with the then Finance Minister and the Prime Minister that we have to charge something for the additional Spectrum beyond 6.2 MHz to get the revenue. The discussion is going on and the Government is intended to charge more for the Spectrum beyond 6.2 MHz.

SHRI AMAR SINGH: Sir, with due respect to the hon. Communications Minister, I, unfortunately, tend to agree with the perception in the country about the Spectrum allocation with the Leader of the Opposition. Having said that, I would specifically like to know whether it is a fact that existing players like Bharti Airtel has approached the Government for additional Spectrum on the subscriber-based allocation criteria. Is the Government considering this proposal? I am not particularly naming it because this is the biggest operator in the country. Additional spectrum allocation on the basis of subscriber-based criteria is happening or not, I would like to know this.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, hon. Member is correct that in India — of course, it is widely appreciated in other countries also — we are allocating spectrum on the basis of the subscriber base. It has been decided by the TEC (Telecom Engineering Centre) and the TRAI that in one Megahertz, how many telephone connections can be activated without any congestion. That is the law. That has been prescribed by the TRAI. According to TRAI's recommendations, if a person reaches a subscriber base, then he is entitled to get 1.8 megahertz or 1 megahertz. We are doing as per the recommendations of the TRAI. As I said earlier, 6.2 is the contractual obligation and the licence condition which has been contemplated. We cannot charge for it since we are collecting revenue annually. Beyond 6.2, no doubt, there is no contractual obligation on the part of the Government. In spite of that, according to the recommendations that have been made by the TRAI, we are giving. First, the Government wanted to charge it. A reasonable assessment is going on. The matter has been referred to TRAI again. As soon as the TRAI gives clarity about the amount which can be charged, what will be subscriber base afresh, it will be implemented duly.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the fact remains that there is a big saving to some of the major mobile operators because of the delay in the process. The system has been put in place, but that should not lead to loss of national exchequer out of the allocation of spectrum which is a national property. On these, there have been complaints of irregularity and impropriety in the allocation of 2G spectrum resulting in the allottee earning a huge premium by transferring or having partnership with other companies and they earned a huge premium out of that allocation. Is the Government going to look into that aspect learning lessons from it and take concrete corrective action so that the national exchequer does not undergo a loss? A proper system should be put in place and the allottee earning a premium depriving the national

exchequer should be permanently sealed and the responsibility should be fixed for those 2G complaints and the scandal that is involved.

SHRI A. RAJA: Sir, legally speaking, we cannot term it as 'scandal'. I had several rounds of talks with hon. Finance Minister. The company that has been awarded spectrum and the licence, as I said earlier, the FDI says that 74 per cent can be sold to any other company. The Government is keen that the induction of the money into the company should be for the betterment of the business of the company which is duly permitted. A person should not be allowed to sell his equity for his personal benefit. That has been already cleared in the norms itself. So, there is no question of scam or there is no question of getting money into individual's pocket. It will come to the company and the corporate law is very clear — Mr. Arun Jaitley is a senior lawyer — that the money is going to be inducted into the company which will be definitely used for the purpose for which the company is floated, not personal.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: Sir, the point has not been clarified. The allottee earned a premium.

SHRI A. RAJA: There is no personal premium at all.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN: He is doing business out of a national property. That thing must be clarified.

Domestic tourism

*3. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of domestic tourists was 527 million in the year 2007, covering adventure and cultural sites, pilgrimages and wildlife parks;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the status of domestic tourists in Andhra Pradesh sites and the revenue earned therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (KUMARI SELJA): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) to (c) The number of domestic tourist visits to different tourist places in the country, including adventure and cultural sites, pilgrimage centres, wildlife parks, etc. during the year 2007 was 527 million., The State-wise figures of domestic tourist visits for 2007 are given in the enclosed Statement-I (*See* below). With 127.93 million domestic tourist visits, Andhra Pradesh ranked first amongst all States/UTs in 2007. The district-wise details of domestic tourist visits in Andhra Pradesh during 2007 are given in the enclosed Statement-II (*See* below). Revenue earnings of Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) during April, 2007 to March, 2008 were Rs. 10089.13 lakhs. Details are given in the enclosed Statement-III.